

Mental Health and Substance Abuse Depression and Suicide

Depression is treatable. Seeking help and receiving treatment for depression will lead to fewer people suffering from depression and fewer people attempting suicide.

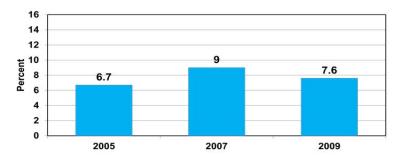
Almost two-thirds of people in Colorado who die by suicide are suffering from depression at the time of their deaths. Unreported and undiagnosed depression, if not treated, may lead individuals to think about suicide, attempt suicide and ultimately die by suicide.¹

Why is this important?

Colorado consistently ranks in the top 10 states in terms of suicide rate. More Coloradans die by suicide than from illnesses such as diabetes, pneumonia or breast cancer. Suicide is the second-leading cause of death for youth (ages 10-24) in Colorado. In addition, nearly one out of every 13 Colorado youth report attempting suicide in the past year.

Where are we?

Percent of Colorado students in grades 9-12 who attempted suicide in the past 12 months, 2005, 2007 and 2009



In 2008, 7 percent of adults reported suffering from depression.

Source: Colorado Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

Source: Youth Risk Behavior Survey, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

Where do we want to be?

By 2016

- Reduce to 5 percent the percentage of children in ninth to 12th grade who report attempting suicide in the previous 12 months.
- Reduce to 5 percent the percentage of adults who report suffering from depression.

What is being done?

The Office of Suicide Prevention, a legislatively mandated state program, collaborates with Colorado communities to reduce the number of suicide attempts and deaths in the state. Through grants to community agencies, community members are trained to identify signs of depression and other behaviors that increase risk for suicide. The Office of Suicide Prevention also has identified additional strategies for decreasing depression in adults and suicide in youth. These strategies include educational campaigns to raise awareness that depression is treatable with medication, just as diabetes is treatable with insulin; encouraging people to seek help when they are feeling depressed; implementing school-based programs that foster help-seeking norms; and fostering supportive relationships and connectedness among youth and adults.

High-risk groups

In Colorado, suicide is higher among certain groups than others.

- Gender: Men are more likely to die by suicide than women.
- Sexual orientation: Individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered are at higher risk for depression and suicide.
- Race: White, non-Hispanic Coloradans die by suicide at a higher rate than any other race.
- Age: Older adults are at an increased risk for suicide.

Underlying causes

Fifty percent of those who die by suicide were afflicted with major depression, and the suicide rate of people with major depression is eight times that of the general population.³

Suicide is a preventable public health problem; treating depression and preventing suicide where we live, learn, work and play is important.⁴

Access to effective mental health care and connectedness between individuals, family members, community organizations and social institutions are major protective factors against depression and suicide.⁵

- (1) Colorado Violent Death Reporting System: Highlights from 2004-2006.
 - http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/pp/injepi/cvdrs/CVDRSoverviewhandout.pdf
- (2) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (1992). Youth suicide prevention programs: A resource guide. Atlanta, GA: Author.
- (3) Jacobs, D, Brewer, M, and Klein-Benheim, M. (1999) Suicide Assessment: An Overview and Recommended Protocol. In *The Harvard Medical School Guide to Suicide Assessment and Intervention* edited by D. Jacobs. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- (4) Goal 1. National Strategy for Suicide Prevention (2001). Rockville, MD: United States Public Health Service.
- (5) Suicide Prevention Resource Center & Rodgers, P. (2011). *Understanding Risk and Protective Factors for Suicide: A Primer for Preventing Suicide*. Newton, MA: Education Development Center, Inc.